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ABSTRACT

Study results provided a grim picture of preservice elementary school teachers' knowledge of social studies content. Participating in the study were 234 juniors and seniors at the University of Georgia and the University of Southern Mississippi. The sample was composed primarily of white, southern, conservative, female education majors who had some field experience, but who had neither taken social studies methods nor student teaching. Participants were given a test to determine if they possessed the knowledge contained in three popular elementary social studies textbook series. Results showed that preservice teachers are ill-prepared to handle the civic education of young children. The test that they were given had a content validity for texts used in grades 1-4 and might be considered a simple test for American adults who have a college education. Yet, applying grading standards used in elementary schools, none of the college seniors would obtain A's on the text, and 40 percent would obtain D's or F's. The study sample performed even worse when asked to identify the general contents of important Constitutional Amendments, or to identify the location of selected states. (RM)

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PRESERVICE TEACHERS' KNOWLEDGE OF SOCIAL STUDIES CONTENT IN THE PRIMARY GRADES

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Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Council for the Social Studies (64th, Washington, DC, November 15-19, 1984).

PRESERVICE TEACHERS' KNOWLEDGE OF SOCIAL STUDIES CONTENT IN THE PRIMARY GRADES

The objective of the research reported here was to assess elementary school social studies content knowledge possessed by preservice teachers at two southern state universities.

Background

In recent years, teachers in general, and elementary school teachers in particular, have taken a beating in the popular press and in academic journals for their alleged intellectual deficiencies and low levels of academic achievement (Iannone, 1984). One widely quoted study found that high school seniors who planned to go into education scored 34 points below the average on the verbal portion of the Scholastic Aptitude Test, and 40 points below the average in math (Travers, 1980; Watts, 1980; Rubinstein, 1983). Others claim to have data indicating that graduates of colleges of education are among the least capable students (Schuttenberg, 1983).

In a sensationalized cover story, Time claimed that "up to 20%" of the nation's teachers "have not mastered the basic skills in reading, writing and arithmetic that they are supposed to teach" (Help! Teacher Can't Teach, 1980). That claim was supported mainly by anecdotal evidence: A kindergarten teacher in Oregon was found to be functionally illiterate, though she held a Masters and had been given A's and B's in college. In Chicago, a third-grade teacher wrote this instruction on the chalkboard: "Put the following words in alfabetical order." Another teacher told a reporter, "I teaches English," In Alabama, a fifth-grade teacher sent the following note to a parent: "Scott is dropping in his studies he acts as if he don't Care. Scott want pass in his assignment at all. he had a poem to learn and he fell to do it."

The experience of the authors of this report substantiates some of the charges made by Time. They have taught curriculum and methods to pre-service elementary social studies teachers in seven universities located in the far west, midwest, and south. They are concerned about the impressive ignorance of history and the social sciences displayed by undergraduate elementary education students. Those students appear to know virtually nothing of current events, cannot locate Lebanon on a map, cannot identify whether the government in Nicaragua is pro or anti-American, and are about as likely to place Caracas in India as in Venezuela. They appear to be similarly ignorant of the history of constitutional rights in the United States, cannot identify Peter Zenger, Roger Williams, or Anne Hutchinson, never heard of Lincoln's attempt to suppress dissenting speech during the Civil War, nor of the government's use of force to suppress radical labor unions during the first quarter of the present century. They do not appear to have the academic background needed to teach cross-cultural comparisons of basic institutions such as family, religion and education. They seem to be similarly ignorant of basic concepts and generalizations recommended by the Joint Council on Economic Education.

Prior Research

Research literature, though limited, supports the authors' impressions concerning lack of social studies content knowledge among preservice elementary education majors. Several studies have assessed teachers' ability to read maps and globes. Schneider (1976) administered a 69-item multiple-choice test, which was referenced to the Nystrom Where and Why map and globe skills programs, to 32 preservice elementary teachers and to 60 inservice teachers. The same test was administered to 479 sixth-grade students, and results were compared between teachers and students. The mean

score for teachers was approximately 53 of 69 items, and did not differ between preservice and inservice teachers. When Schneider examined his data item by item, he found that less than half of his elementary teachers could identify: the terms globe, latitude, and longitude; lines of latitude and longitude; the mouth and source of a river; revolution and the earth's tilt as causes of seasonal change; climate, on the basis of latitude and elevation of a city. Not surprisingly, sixth-grade students exhibited the same weaknesses as their teachers, plus others.

Green (1983) also administered the Nystrom test to 495 elementary education majors. The average score for preservice teachers was approximately 56 of 69, compared to 53 in the Schneider study. When Green examined errors item by item he found the same general set of weaknesses identified by Schneider. Elementary education majors had difficulty with latitude and longitude, the relation of elevation and latitude to climate, locating the mouth, source, and direction of flow of a river, the comparative advantages of maps versus globes, and revolution and tilt of the earth.

Four doctoral studies, and an unpublished Ed.S. paper, lend general support to the findings of Green (1983) and Schneider (1976). Abstracts of dissertations by Stjernberg (1974), and Garvida (1977) indicate that primary-grade teachers are not well prepared to teach map skills. The abstract of a dissertation by Frazee (1975) contained the same conclusion regarding teachers in the intermediate grades. Nissen's (1970) study leads the reader to believe that teachers have difficulty with some map skills, but data are not presented for individual items. Ross' (1984) Ed.S. paper presents data item and item, and identifies weaknesses similar to those found by Schneider (1976) and Green (1983).

A number of studies have examined place-name knowledge of college students in general and of education majors in particular. Results indicate severe shortcomings for both groups, with education students performing even more poorly than students majoring in other fields. Ehrich (1960) and Black (1971) published small-scale studies of their own college students. Ehrich provided outline maps of the United States to 52 students in two sections of a sociology-anthropology course at Brooklyn College. One section of students contained only education majors. The other contained a mixture of majors, including preservice teachers. Black (1971) provided an outline map to 109 students in a U.S. history survey course. Approximately half of his students were majoring in elementary education, and roughly one-fourth were history or social science majors who planned to teach in the secondary schools. In both studies, students were required to identify states, mountain ranges, the Great Lakes, major rivers, and some major cities. Ehrich's students, not counting five education majors who failed to turn in their maps, missed approximately 40% of the states. Black obtained comparable results, and his elementary education majors performed substantially worse on the test than the secondary students. At least fifty percent of Black's students were unable to identify Louisiana, Delaware, New Hampshire, Vermont, Minnesota, Maryland, Arkansas, Wyoming, Chesapeake Bay, Lake Huron, Lake Ontario, or Lake Superior. Five of the 47 students who turned in maps at Brooklyn College could not locate New York State, and nine could not identify the Hudson River. Reports by Fine (1951) and Williams (1952) contain equally dismal results, though they did not categorize data by college majors.

Two studies examined college students' knowledge of place names in world geography. Herman, Hawkins and Berryman (1984) compared the performance of 254 elementary school majors to that of 28 secondary social studies majors.

Wise (1975) compared the performance of 38 geography graduates who planned to teach in secondary schools to 60 noneducation university graduates. Results in both studies were striking. Less than 40% of the elementary majors were able to locate England, and less than 30% could locate France, compared to 96% and 93% of the secondary social studies majors. Similarly, though 86% of the secondary majors could locate Japan, only 34% of the elementary majors could do so.

Wise (1975) supplied students with a list of cities and asked them to name the country. All of his geography majors could identify Athens with Greece and London with England, but 30% or more failed to identify countries associated with cities such as Algiers, Prague, Tel Aviv, and Caracas. Less than 50% of the future geography teachers could identify Beunos Aires, Lisbon, and Manila. The university graduates who did not major in geography scored ten to fifteen points lower than the geography majors. Given the results of the study by Herman, Hawkins and Berryman (1984) the reader might expect elementary education majors to perform poorly on the test given by Wise (1975), though he did not provide data to test that assumption.

Most of the studies in our possession focus on geography skills or place name knowledge. Our interest in the geographic knowledge of teachers rests, in part, on our commitment to citizenship education. We agree with Ehrich (1960), who claims that geographic "..... education strengthens one in his capacity to function as an informed individual in a free society." We agree that it is difficult to see how citizens can take an informed stand on the President's foreign policy if they cannot locate Tel Aviv, or are ignorant of the relations between countries in Central America, such as Nicaragua and El Salvador.

Torney-Purta (1982) reported data which illustrate the relationship between geographic knowledge, broadly conceived, and citizenship education. The Council on Learning administered a global awareness test to approximately 3,000 college freshmen and seniors. The test contained 101 items which clustered around 13 global issues, including the environment, population, international trade, human rights, war, religious issues, relations among states, and other topics. Torney-Purta claims that the test was demanding, and that many items could not be answered correctly unless students had made a special effort to become informed on global issues. Disturbing gaps in college students information are apparent in the data: Only half of the students knew that SALT II imposed controls on the development of new weapons. Only 15% of the seniors knew that the United States is less vulnerable to market shifts in the price of oil than are Japan, West Germany or Brazil, and less than half knew that negotiations over a Law of the Sea Treaty involved concerns about sovereignty over coastal waters. Though the implications of these findings are important, the performance of education majors was cause for even greater concern. The mean score for senior education majors was 39.8 out of 101 compared to 52.8 for social science majors and 59.3 for history majors. The average score for freshmen education majors, 36.6 out of 101, was lower than that for any other group in the study. Even math and science majors scored substantially higher than future teachers, with means ranging from 51.7 to 54.1.

There is other content in elementary social studies which is important for citizenship education. A few relevant reports are reviewed next. McCloughlin, Sametz and Streib (1983) administered a "Survey of Children's Legal Rights" to a sample of 248 education majors at a midwestern university. The sample seems to have contained both elementary and secondary preservice

teachers, though the proportion of subjects who majored in elementary education was not identified. Parts of this study were relevant to our interests because they dealt with citizenship education topics which could be taught to elementary school children, such as freedom of speech, freedom of religion, due process, and the right to privacy. It has been our experience that elementary school teachers do not teach these topics, and know very little about them. Results obtained by McCloughlin, Sametz and Streib (1983) were consistent with our impressions. Correct response to four questions concerning freedom of speech and freedom of the press ranged from approximately 44% to 77%. Correct response for three items dealing with freedom of religion ranged from approximately 25% to 79%. Three items dealing with search and seizure ranged from 50% to 88%. The rate of correct response for six items dealing with due process was surprisingly high, with 90% or more of the students providing correct answers to half of the questions. The authors concluded that prospective teachers exhibited substantial uncertainty over freedom of speech, press, religion, and privacy. In reflecting on these findings, we are reminded of Butts (1983) affirmation:

> I believe that the fundamental ideas and values upon which our constitutional order is built should be the core of sustained and explicit study, based upon realistic and scholarly knowledge and searching criticism, carried on throughout the school years from kindergarten through high school. Thus all teachers should be prepared for this task in their liberal and professional teacher education (p. 48).

Many people claim that instruction in economics is an important ingredient of the citizenship education of elementary school children (Schug & Birkey, in press). Larkins (1968) claims that economic knowledge of teachers

has been tested, and that they were found wanting, but he reports no details of the study supporting that claim. Weidenaar (1980) also claims that teachers are ill-prepared to teach economics. He did not test teachers, but reports a claim by the Joint Council on Economic Education that "courses of study by future teachers do not include sufficient economics education for identification and application of basic concepts" (p. 197).

Only one study in our possession assessed elementary teachers knowledge across a range of social studies content. Kleg (1973) administered the SRA Test of Economic Understanding, the SRA Principles of Democracy Test, a self-designed Place Location Test, and a self-designed Test of Social Awareness to samples of preservice elementary education majors. Mean score for 74 subjects who took the 50-item, four-foil Test of Economic Understanding was 25.57. Mean score for 95 subjects who took the 65-item Principles of Democracy Test was 40.82. Fifty-six subjects took the Place Location Test which contained 30 items, each with nine foils. The PLT assessed knowledge of the location of continents, nations, bodies of water, and cities and states. The mean score was approximately 17 of 30 items. Social Awareness was tested with 34 true-false items which assessed knowledge of due process, race, the relation of poverty to crime, status of women, and other topics. The mean score for 72 subjects was approximately 23 of 34 items. In considering this last result, it should be kept in mind that approximately half of the items on a true-false test can be responded to correctly by guessing.

Kleg (1973) did not report item-by-item results for the Test of Economic Understanding, but he did report results for some individual items on the other three tests. He reported, for instance that 69% of the elementary teachers incorrectly believed that custom and usage have not brought about changes in the United States Constitution. Seventy-four percent believed that

the majority party in Congress has the power to call special sessions, and one-fourth of the elementary education majors believed that U.S. Senators serve two-year terms. On the place location test, approximately one-fourth of the students could not identify the location of Europe, Asia or Australia. On the bright side, 92% could identify South America and Africa. However, only about half of the elementary preservice teachers could identify Vietnam, China, Japan, England, Saudi Arabia or Israel. One-fourth of the subjects could not identify the Mississippi River. Less than 20% could identify Lake Michigan. Item results on Kleg's test of social awareness are not reported here, because items seem to be a mixture of fact and attitude, which makes them difficult to interpret in terms of correct response, though Kleg scores them as correct-incorrect.

Problem

Although there have been a number of studies concerning preservice elementary school teachers' knowledge of social studies content, most of those in our possession focus on geographic knowledge. We know of only one attempt to measure a range of social studies content (Kleg, 1980). Additional studies appear to be needed, which focus on a range of content which is or ought to be included in the elementary school social studies curriculum. Based on studies conducted to date, we expect that additional research will indicate substantial gaps in the social studies knowledge of elementary preservice teachers.

Procedures

Sample. A convenience sample of 234 juniors and seniors at the University of Georgia and the University of Southern Mississippi was used for the present study. The present sample was composed primarily of white,

southern, conservative, female, education majors who had not entered student teaching.

Instruments. The authors wanted to know whether preservice teachers possess the knowledge contained in elementary social studies texts. Three of the most popular elementary social studies series--Follett, Scott Foresman, and Ginn--for Grades One through Four were examined. Several categories of content were identified: Topics in U.S. History, such as exploration and settlement, indians, slavery; social science concepts such as communities, rules and laws, family, resources, climate; famous people, such as George Washington and Harriet Tubman; and place locations. Frequency counts were made for the occurrence of topics, and test items were obtained or written to approximate those frequencies. Topics and test items were examined by an experienced colleague as a check on content validity. The product of this process was a 50-item, four-foil, multiple-choice Social Studies Content Examination. Reliability, using the KR-21 formula, was estimated to be .91.

A second instrument was also written, which reflects content that elementary social studies teachers should know, though not all of it is contained in student texts. Part of this test is composed of 18 four-foil, multiple-choice items, 14 of which test knowledge of values in the American Bill of Rights. The remaining items test knowledge of famous men who are frequently mentioned in elementary social studies texts. A second portion of this instrument is a matching exercise which tests knowledge of famous women. The last portion lists 15 states which students are to locate on an outline map of the United States. Reliability, using the KR-21 formula, was estimated to be .43. The authors assume that low reliability was due to random variance introduced into scores by the large number of students who guessed at the correct answer on most items. We will not be able to test that

assumption until the instrument is given to a more knowledgeable sample of subjects.

Administration. Instruments were administered during the academic year 1984-85, plus summer session 1985. Administrators were the regular instructors of cooperating classes. Subjects were given no external incentive to do well on the exam, such as extra credit toward a course grade, and they were reassured that scores would not prejudice evaluation of their performance during Fall Quarter. Students in courses where the authors administered the instruments appeared to take the task seriously, and appeared to try to score well.

Results

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Tables 1 and 2 About Here

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Social Studies Content Exam. Descriptive findings, rounded to the nearest percent, are given in Tables 1 and 2 for the Social Studies Content Examination. It should be kept in mind that this test has content validity for social studies texts used in grades one through four. It ought to be an embarrassingly simple test for American adults who have a college education. The Georgia sample of juniors and seniors, majoring in elementary education, produced an average score of 71% on the SSCE. Applying grading standards usually used in elementary schools, only 3% of this sample would have received A's, 19% B's, 37% C's, 31% D's and 10% F's. Results were even worse for two of the three major divisions within the test: Sixty percent of the Georgia sample would have received D's or F's on the History and Biography items, and 48% would have received D's or F's on the Geography items.

The sample used in this study scored much higher on the General Topics portion of the SSCE than on the History or Geography portions. The contrast in results is striking when the percent of Georgia students scoring in the 90's is examined—55% for General Topics, compared to 3% and 7% for History and Geography. The reason for that difference is evident when typical items are examined for the three portions of the Social Studies Content Examination.

Data in Table 2 indicate that the Mississippi sample produced the same general pattern of results as the Georgia sample. Scores were slightly lower on most sections of the test for Mississippi students, but differences are of no practical significance. Performance by both samples was dismal.

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Table 3 About Here

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The two items under General Topics in Table 3 are obviously easy. In contrast to items in History and Geography these items test relatively simple vocabulary terms. There were several items of this sort on the SSCE. Nevertheless, some students missed half of the items on the General Topics portion of the test.

Response to Items two and four in Table 3 indicate that they are more difficult than the General Topics items. Only 20% of the Georgia sample correctly selected the fourth response on Item two; nearly two-thirds of that sample apparently believed that Christopher Columbus was a Portuguese sailor who landed in Brazil. Since 25% of our sample could be expected to select any of the four options by chance, we cannot conclude that any of our students knew enough about Columbus to answer this question. Furthermore, that 13% of future teachers from the University of Georgia selected a response which indicated that Columbus was heading for England is an embarrassment. In

contrast to Item two, the majority of that sample selected the correct response to Item six, which would be reassuring had not 18% selected a response which indicates that the American Revolution lasted 63 years. Some also confused the time-frames for the Revolution and the Civil War.

Items 32 and 39 in Table 3 indicate similar rates of correct response to major geographic features of North and South America. One could view responses to these two items either positively or negatively. Our view is negative regarding responses to the location of the Central Plains. We fail to see how future teachers with even the most rudimentary, but correct, notions of the approximate location of major mountain ranges in North America could select any of the three incorrect responses to this item.

The average student in our sample missed 15 items on the Social Studies Content Examination. The test paper for one student, picked at random, contained several disturbing errors. If we take this student's test responses at face value, she believed that: Anne Hutchinson and Roger Williams were staunch Puritans, the colony that the French set up along the St. Lawrence River is now called Ohio; English soldiers that fought the Battle of Concord were sent there to collect taxes; the American Revolution lasted from 1763 to 1789; by 1890, the Indians of the Great Plains had left the United States and moved to Canada; Frederick Douglass, rather than Stephen A. Douglas, took the position that new states entering the union should be given the option to decide whether to allow slavery; in the past, an Eskimo wife made the tools and weapons, rather than the family's clothes; the Amish do not depend on each other; the Kalahari is a mountain; the Blue Ridge Mountains and the Allegheny Plateau are part of the Rocky Mountains; the United States exports more fish than wheat; Israelis are not very good farmers; Tientsin is a large city in Kenya; and Siberia is in Europe. We repeat that these errors were made by a

member of our sample who made an average score. Some students made nearly twice as many errors, which reflected even more astonishing notions about social and historical reality.

In addition to the above errors, one of the poorer test papers in our sample reflects the following misconceptions: The American Revolution lasted from 1700 to 1763; Russia, rather than France, helped the Americans in the Revolutionary War; Lewis and Clark explored Alaska: all Americans came to the United States for religious freedom; before people started settling in communities, they lived in towns and cities; a renewable resource is a manufactured product; the World's largest rain forest is located in the Andes mountains; the Central Plains are located between the Sierra Nevadas and the Rocky Mountains; the Amazon River is in Europe; the Amazon River starts high in the Cascade Mountains; Norway is an island; colonization by Europeans caused African tribes to become stronger; and the southernmost tip of Africa is Cape Verde.

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Tables 4 and 5 About Here

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Nontext exam. Results for the test which was not validated to children's social studies texts are presented in Tables 4 and 5. Almost all of the students who took the nontext exam failed it, if conventional standards for grades are applied. For the Georgia sample the mean for the total test was 40%. Means for the three major parts of the test ranged from 30% to 50%. More than 90% of the sample scored below 59% for the total test and for two of the three subsections. Scores for the map test on states were higher than for any other subsection of the exam, but 61% of the sample scored below 59% on it.

As on the SSCE, performance of the Mississippi sample was similar to the Georgia sample on the nontext exam. Generally difference were small and of no practical significance, because both samples performed far below our expectation for future teachers.

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Table 6 About Here

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An abbreviated version of the first 18 items on the nontext exam is presented in Table 6, along with the percent of each sample which responded correctly to each item. When examining Table 6, it should be kept in mind that approximately 25% of the respondents should be able to guess the correct answer to each four-foil item. By inspection, it appears that nearly all students guessed when responding to Items 2, 3, 4, 6, 9, 11, 12, 13, and 14. Substantial rates of correct response are evident for only three questions—Items 1, 17, and 18. The proportion of correct response to the remaining six items seems to be larger than would be expected if all students were guessing, but certainly is not very impressive. Our reaction to the data in Table 6 may be characterized by noting that we fail to see how future elementary school teachers can perform their responsibilities toward civic education if they cannot identify the relationship between the First and Fourteenth Amendments, or identify heroes in the struggle for freedom, such as Lovejoy, Lilburn, Dyer and Sanger.

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Table 7 About Here

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Table 7 contains a precis of a matching item for 19 famous women. During the past twenty years, many attempts have been made to increase knowledge of

contributions of women to American society. The authors of this report support those attempts by encouraging students in their social studies methods courses to read about and prepare lessons about famous women. The second part of the nontext test reflects his belief in the importance of that topic.

With very few exceptions, the average female senior elementary education major in the Georgia and Mississippi samples knows virtually nothing of the contribution of women to the development of our society. Most have apparently heard of the Susan B. Anthony dollar, which is a relatively trivial bit of information, but we doubt that they know anything of substance about Ms. Anthony's contributions to American History. At least they appear to know little, if anything, about the contribution of other important women, such as Elizabeth Blackwell, Margaret Sanger, Jane Adams, Dorothea Dix, Anne Hutchinson and Clara Barton. When we examined the range of scores in the Georgia sample for the matching item on famous women, we found that only one student, of 164, was able to identify as many as 15 of the 19 women listed. Only three students were able to identify as many as 12, and 20% of the sample could identify three or fewer names on our list. Performance by the Mississippi sample was no better. Most of the women on our list are famous historical figures, but two of them, Sandra Day O'Connor and Elizabeth Dole, hold prominent positions in American government today. Nearly 40% of the students in each sample could not identify Justice O'Connor, and virtually no one had heard of Secretary Dole. That finding supports our impression that elementary education majors neither watch the news on TV, nor read the newspaper. It might be instructive to find out how many can identify the character-names of participants in General Hospital. Results in Table 7 indicate that we cannot assume that college women will take the initiative to

learn about women's history, nor can we assume that the American History survey courses which our students have taken contain adequate content about women.

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Table 8 About Here

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The last portion of the nontext examination consisted of a listing of 15 states which students were to locate on a blank outline map of the United States. States were selected to represent the major regions of the country: Far West, Midwest, Northeast, and South. The only states which a majority of the students were able to identify were: Georgia, Tennessee, Alaska, Louisiana, and New Mexico. Less than half of the students in our sample were able to correctly identify the remaining ten states on the list.

We would expect all of the University of Georgia students to be able to identify Georgia. Tennessee borders Georgia on the north, and Louisiana both contains New Orleans and has a football team which is a member of the Southeastern Conference, so correct identification of those states comes as no surprise. Alaska, like California and Texas, is highly visable because of size, shape, location or national publicity. New Mexico is a more puzzling case, especially since the rates of correct response for Arizona and Colorado were much lower. Perhaps New Mexico's name serves as a mnemonic device.

In addition to percent of correct response for each state, Table 8 contains examples of misidentifications for each of the fifteen states. Misidentifications can be categorized as near-hits or clear-misses. Identifying Mississippi as Louisiana would be a near-hit because the states are adjacent. Identifying Maine as Alaska would be a clear-miss. Preliminary

analysis of our data indicate that there were more near-hits than clear-misses.

In some cases, the number and extent of clear-misses seem to indicate that students had no comprehension of the location of states beyond the immediate borders of their home state. For instance, the reversal of labels for Wisconsin and Minnesota is understandable, unless you live in one of those states. But to locate Minnesota in Maryland, Montana, New York or Arkanses seems to indicate clear lack of information. It is understandable that someone would confuse New Mexico with Arizona, but it is a clear sign of ignorance to place Arizona in Idaho, Montana, or Missouri. We do not understand how college seniors can move coastal states inland. Switching Oregon with Washington, for instance, seems like a normal mistake. But we are mystified by students who drag Oregon eastward to land in Montana, North Dakota, Wyoming, Colorado, Iowa or Wisconsin. To a person raised in the West, those sort of errors are equivalent to the relocation of Maine in Louisiana, which did not happen in our sample, or the relocation of Alaska in Maine, which did happen.

The map item provided some unexpected insight into students' map skills. The outline map which we used shows latitude and longitude with solid lines, but shows state borders with dotted lines. A sizable minority of our sample confused lines of latitude or longitude with lines indicating borders. The results were both sad and amusing. For instance, one student thought that Montana was two states, and labeled both halves. Neither half was given the name Montana. Other students apparently did not understand the nature of inset maps, which were used to show Alaska and Hawaii. Since the inset for Hawaii was placed over Mexico, one student compounded an error by labeling Hawaii as New Mexico.

The extent to which some students are ignorant of place vocabulary of states is indicated by picking one of several very bad test papers. The paper before us has Wyoming labeled Wisconsin, Arizona is labeled Rhode Island, that portion of Oklahoma which lies below the 35th parallel is labeled Louisiana, Indiana has taken over Missouri, which elbowed Wisconsin aside, Minnesota has been displaced by Connecticut, so it has occupied North Dakota, Oregon has traveled coast to coast, landing in Pennsylvania, Alaska has been dumped in Lake Superior, and New Mexico is now in deep water off the western coast of Florida. In the midst of all that, the student was able to locate Kansas, in addition to Georgia and Tennessee.

Conclusion

This paper has presented a grim picture of preservice elementary school teachers' knowledge of social studies content. Based on limited but consistent evidence, it appears that preservice teachers are ill-prepared to handle the civic education of young children. Results presented in Tables 1 and 2 indicate that virtually none of the college seniors in our sample would obtain A's on a Fourth-Grade social studies test, and that forty percent would obtain D's or F's. Our sample performed even worse when asked to identify the general contents of important Amendments to the Constitution, or to identify famous women or the location of selected states.

Certainly, additional studies with better instruments and larger, more representative samples, are needed to determine the extent to which lack of knowledge may be a problem among elementary school teachers. Nevertheless, the research literature available seems to indicate that the problem is serious and widespread. If so, we need to consider what might be done, for the sake of our children and of our profession.

TABLE ONE

Results of Social Studies Content Examination:

University of Georgia

	Mean Percent	Range	Percent of Scores Between: 90-100	80-89	70-79	60-69	59-0
Total Test (50 items)	71*	48-92	3	19	37	31	10
History & Biography (15 items)	66	38-100	3	10	27	31	29
General Topics (10 items)	85	50-100	55	26	15	3	1
Geography (20 items)	68	30-100	7	22	23	23	25

* N of students = 168

TABLE TWO

Results of Social Studies Content Examination:

University of Southern Mississippi

	Mean Percent	Range	Percent of Scores Between: 90-100	80-89	70-79	60-69	59-0
Total Test (50 items)	68*	50-88	0	10	30	41	19
History & Biography (15 items)	54	27-87	0	6	17	34	43
General Topics (10 items)	86	50-100	53	27	19	0	01
Geography (20 items)	65	40-90	4	16	27	24	29

* N of students = 70

TABLE THREE

Typical Items on the Social Studies Content Examination

History and Biography

2. Christopher Columbus
   a. was a Portuguese sailor who landed on the coast of what is today Brazil. (64%)* (21%)**
   b. wanted to teach Christianity to the American Indians. (3%) (3%)
   c. was an Italian who sailed for England and landed on North America. (13%) (52%)
   d. landed on the island of San Salvador. (20%) (24%)

6. The American Revolution lasted from
   a. 1700 to 1763. (18%)* (19%)**
   b. 1775 to 1781. (63%) (52%)
   c. 1861 to 1865. (11%) (10%)
   d. 1763 to 1789. (8%) (19%)

General Topics

19. Which of these words name things that a community must have?
   a. canals (1%)* (2%)**
   b. services (95%) (98%)
   c. movie houses (2%) (0%)
   d. fishponds (2%) (0%)

26. Things that can be used to satisfy our needs and wants are called
   a. recongition. (1%)* (0%)**
   b. society. (0%) (5%)
   c. seasons. (0%) (2%)
   d. resources. (99%) (93%)

Geography

32. The Central Plains are located between the
   a. Appalachian Mountains and the Rocky Mountains. (65%)* (55%)**
   b. Sierra Nevadas and the Rocky Mountains. (28%) (19%)
   c. Sierra Nevadas and the Pacific Ocean. (5%) (9%)
   d. Appalachian Mountains and the Atlantic Ocean. (2%) (17%)

39. The Amazon River starts high in the
   a. Cascade Mountains. (18%)* (16%)**
   b. Andes Mountains. (70%) (68%)
   c. Atlas Mountains. (0%) (4%)
   d. Ural Mountains. (12%) (12%)

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*Percent of UGA sample which selected each option.

**Percent of USM sample which selected each option.

TABLE FOUR

Results of the Nontext Examination

University of Georgia

	Mean Percent	Range	Percent of Scores Between: 90-100	80-89	70-79	60-69	59-0
Total Test (52 items)	40*	15-77	0	0	2	5	93
Constitution and Related Topics (18 items)	41	4-72	0	0	2	5	93
Famous Women (19 items)	30	0-79	0	0	1	2	97
States (15 items)	50	7-100	6	6	8	19	61

* N of students = 168

TABLE FIVE

Results of the Nontext Examination:

University of Southern Mississippi

	Mean Percent	Range	Percent of Scores Between: 90-100	80-89	70-79	60-69	59-0
Total Test (52 items)	38*	15-67	0	0	0	2	98
Constitution and Related Topics (18 items)	29	17-61	0	0	0	5	95
Famous Women (19 items)	31	5-79	0	0	5	0	95
States	47	0-100	4	6	6	21	63

* N of students = 52 (Eighteen students did not take this portion of the exam)

TABLE SIX

Precis of First Eighteen Questions on Nontext Exam*

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1. Which Amendment guarantees freedom of speech? (Amendment One)
   71%* 83%**

2. Which Amendment guarantees the right of privacy? (Amendment Four)
   28% 223%

3. Which Amendment guarantees the right to bail, and prohibits cruel and unusual punishment? (Amendment Eight)
   30% 29%

4. Which Amendment extends the Bill of Rights to actions by state governments? (Amendment Fourteen)
   15% 10%

5. Which of the four media has the weakest First Amendment Rights? (Television)
   56% 48%

6. Which Associate Justice often agreed with Douglas on First Amendment Rights? (Black)
   20% 25%

7. How many American colonies had obscenity laws? (None)
   41% 31%

8. Which party passed the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798? (Federalists)
   45% 44%

9. The law under which American communists were tried in Dennis v. United States is known as: (The Smith Act)
   31% 23%

10. Who was the founder of the planned parenthood movement? (Margaret Sanger)
    46% 40%

11. Who was the first American martyr for freedom of the press? (Elijah Lovejoy)
    27% 21%

12. Which of the following persons is famous for helping to establish the right against self-incrimination? (John Lilburn)
    20% 17%

13. Who was executed for being a Quaker? (Mary Dyer)
    37% 37%

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*Percent of correct responses, University of Georgia, N = 168
**University of Southern Mississippi, N = 52

Table Six (continued)

14. Who led the "Red Scare" raids? (A. Mitchell Palmer)
    28%* 23%**

15. A leader for Venezuela's fight for independence was: (Bolivar)
    46% 48%

16. Lewis and Clark were guided by: (Sacagawea)
    58% 56%

17. Frederick Douglas: (Worked to end slavery)
    79% 71%

18. George Washington Carver worked at: (Tuskegee)
    75% 56%

*Percent of correct response, University of Georgia, N = 168
**U.S.M., N = 52

TABLE SEVEN

Precis of Matching Item on Nineteen Famous Women*

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1. Elizabeth Blackwell: (First woman physician in the U.S.)
   12%** 27%***

2. Susan B. Anthony: (First to have likeness on U.S. coin)
   80% 88%

3. Margaret Sanger: (Birth control advocate)
   18% 29%

4. Florence Nightengail: (Founder of modern nursing profession)
   61% 56%

5. Amelia Earhart: (First woman to complete trans-Atlantic flight)
   75% 71%

6. Harriet Tubman: (Conductor on the underground railroad)
   46% 23%

7. Jeanett Rankin: (Member of Congress)
   4% 8%

8. Abagail Adams: (Urged women's rights in letters to husband)
   30% 12%

9. Jane Adams: (Founded Hull House)
   10% 10%

10. Elizabeth Dole: (U.S. Secretary of Transportation)
    17% 31%

11. Dorothea Dix: (Reform of institutions for the mentally ill)
    7% 13%

12. Margaret Bourke-White: (War correspondent-photographer)
    7% 17%

13. Anne Hutchinson: (Banned from Mississippi for religious beliefs)
    35% 17%

14. Sandra Day O'Connor: (First female Supreme Court Justice)
    61% 62%

15. Clara Barton: (Founded American Red Cross)
    25% 17%

16. Carry Nation: (Tried to stop the sale of liquor)
    10% 17%

Table Seven (continued)

17. Wilma Rudolph: (Three gold medals in Olympic track)
33% 46%

18. Molly Pitcher: (Heroine of Revolutionary War)
21% 17%

19. Nellie Bly: (Daring newspaper woman of 1800's)
3% 10%

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*Abbreviated from a matching item.
**Percent of sample which responded correctly to each item.
***Percent of USM sample which responded correctly to each item.

TABLE EIGHT

Identification of States on Nontext Examination

Target State	States Misidentified as Target State
Alaska (75%)*	(Maine, Canada)**
Arizona (44%)	(Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Kansas, Missouri)
Colorado (39%)	(Wyoming, Kansas, Utah, Idaho, Iowa, Minnesota, California, South Dakota, Oregon, Arizona)
Connecticut (15%)	(Massachusetts, Delaware, Vermont, Montana, New Hampshire, West Virginia, Maryland, New Jersey, Illinois, Tennessee)
Georgia (100%)	(None)
Indiana (37%)	(Illinois, Wyoming, South Dakota, Oklahoma, Michigan, Ohio, Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, Idaho)
Kansas (42%)	(Wyoming, Oklahoma, Missouri, Colorado, North Dakota, Arkansas, Nebraska)
Louisiana (74%)	(Mississippi, Illinois, Colorado, Oklahoma)
Minnesota (30%)	(Maryland, Wisconsin, Montana, Iowa, Michigan South Dakota, New York, Wyoming, Arkansas, Ohio)
Missouri (37%)	(Minnesota, Kansas, Arkansas, Colorado, Wisconsin, Utah, Kentucky)
New Mexico (65%)	(Arizona, Mexico, Hawaii)
Oregon (44%)	(Washington, Montana, Wyoming, Iowa, Wisconsin, North Dakota, Colorado)
Rhode Island (33%)	(Massachusetts, West Virginia, Delaware, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Maryland, Maine)
Tennessee (95%)	(Alabama)

Table Eight (continued)

Wisconsin (27%)	(Iowa, Montana, Minnesota, Wyoming, Nebraska, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Kansas, Maryland, Nevada, Michigan)

*The percent of correct response to each state is contained in parentheses. Percents are based on the total sample of 164 students.

**Examples of misidentifications are based on a random sample of 35 of 164 test papers.

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